

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for distributing video content, the system comprising:  
a portable mass data storage device capable of storing video content;  
an interactive kiosk configured to be located in a public location, the  
kiosk configured to receive and to communicate with the device; and  
a set-top box configured to receive the device, the set-top box configured  
to read video content from the device and to provide the video content as an  
output signal.
2. The system of Claim 1,  
wherein the set-top box is further configured to write content use data to  
the device, and  
wherein the interactive kiosk is further configured to read content use  
data from the device.
3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the portable mass data storage comprises  
a passive storage medium.
4. The system of Claim 3, wherein the kiosk and the set-top box effect  
communication with the storage device by reading data from or writing data to the  
storage medium.
5. A system for distributing video content, the system comprising:  
a portable mass data storage device capable of storing video content;  
an interactive kiosk configured to be located in a public location, the  
kiosk configured to receive the device, to read content use data from the device,  
and to write data to the device; and  
a set-top box configured to receive the device, the set-top box configured  
to receive video content from the device and to provide the video content as an  
output signal, the set-top box configured to write content use data to the device.
6. A method of obtaining and using video content, the method comprising:  
connecting a portable mass data storage device capable of storing video  
content to a first interactive kiosk in a public location to establish  
communication between the device and the first kiosk;  
selecting available video content to be loaded onto the device;

disconnecting the device from the first kiosk;

connecting the device to a set-top box in a private location to establish communication between the device and the set-top box; and

causing the set-top box to decode and output a portion of the available video content.

7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising

connecting the device to a second kiosk such that content use data written to the device by the set-top box can be read by the second kiosk.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the first kiosk and the second kiosk are the same kiosk.

9. A portable video content storage device capable of storing video content, the content storage device configured to be accessed by a compatible interactive kiosk and a compatible set-top box, the content storage device specifically configured to be incompatible with substantially all publicly available electronic devices capable of accessing video content, other than the kiosk and the set-top box.

10. A portable video content storage device consisting essentially of:

a nonvolatile mass storage device capable of storing at least one hour of at least MPEG-2 quality video content;

a durable and portable housing configured to contain and protect the mass storage device; and

a connector extending through the housing, the connector configured to extend electrical connections from outside the housing to the mass storage device.

11. The device of Claim 10, wherein the mass storage device is a disk drive.

12. The device of Claim 11, wherein the disk drive has at least a 3-gigabyte capacity.

13. The device of Claim 12, wherein the disk drive is configured such that it is incompatible with industry standard disk drive controllers.

14. A portable video content storage device comprising:

a mass storage device capable of storing video content;

a durable, portable housing configured to contain and protect the disk drive; and

a connector attached to the housing, the connector configured to extend electrical connections from outside the housing to the mass storage device,

5 wherein the video content storage device is configured to be accessed by a compatible interactive kiosk and a compatible set-top box, and

wherein the video content storage device is specifically configured to be incompatible with substantially all publicly available electronic devices capable of accessing video content, other than the kiosk and the set-top box.

10 15. The device of Claim 14, wherein the mass storage device is a disk drive.

16. A portable video content storage device comprising:

a disk drive capable of storing video content;

15 a controller connected to and configured to control the disk drive, the controller comprising a security module configured to limit access to the disk drive;

a durable, portable housing configured to contain and protect the disk drive and the controller; and

a connector attached to the housing, the connector configured to extend electrical connections from outside the housing to the controller.

20 17. The device of Claim 16, wherein the security module is further configured to separately limit read and write access to the disk drive.

18. The device of Claim 16, wherein the controller comprises a data buffer configured to buffer data as the data is transferred to or from the disk drive.

25 19. The device of Claim 16, wherein the connector is further configured to extend at least one optical data link from outside the housing to the controller.

20. The device of Claim 16, wherein the security module is configured to authenticate any device attempting to access the disk drive.

30 21. A set-top box for accessing video content stored on a portable video content storage device, the set-top box comprising:

a receptacle configured to receive the portable video content storage device;

a video decoder module configured to present the video content as an output signal; and

a processor configured to control the video decoder module and the portable video content storage device, the processor configured to accumulate content use data and to store the accumulated content use data on the storage device.

22. A method of presenting video content and providing information related to the use of the video content, the method comprising:

receiving a portable mass data storage device storing video content;

reading a portion of the video content from the storage device;

presenting the portion of the video content;

accumulating present content use data; and

storing the present content use data on the storage device.

23. The method of Claim 22, further comprising:

reading prior content use data from the storage device; and

amending the prior content use data to incorporate the present content use data.

24. The method of Claim 23, further comprising

storing the amended content use data on the storage device.

25. The method of Claim 22, wherein the content use data comprises a listing of executed user commands.

26. The method of Claim 22, wherein the content use data associates a number of uses with a portion of the video content.

27. An access unit for accessing data stored on a portable video content storage device, the access unit comprising:

a receptacle configured to receive the portable video content storage device; and

a translation module configured to translate a nonstandard communications protocol used by the storage device into an industry standard communications protocol.

28. The access unit of Claim 27, further comprising

